

Xeroxmorphs in Dittoland - Super Beau in Wonder World

Written by dreamkatcha. Any related videos, as always, can be found on my YouTube channel.

None of this would have been possible without the fantastic resources generously provided by immensely talented emulator authors, and communities such as Hall of Light, Lemon Amiga, Lemon 64, World of Spectrum, Moby Games, World of Longplays and Recorded Amiga Games. Thank you for your tireless dedication to preserving the history of gaming.

Unless you've been living under a rock for the last... well, *forever*, you'll be familiar with the way sequels work. For all the Rockites out there, please allow me to school you on the subject. Consider the 'School of Rock' now in session.

Publisher X releases game Y, and if it's really popular its fans hanker after a follow-up. A year or two later, these tend to materialise because publishers like to sell games that gamers like to buy. Ka-ching! etc. etc.

So what happened with Kid Gloves and the sequel Millennium imaginatively christened 'Kid Gloves II' is a mystery of Daikatana-sized proportions.

Kid Gloves I possesses a certain magnetic charm in that David Whittaker's audio and the awkwardly animated

graphics are quirkily memorable, and the plot utter nonsense. If you can look beyond the infuriatingly mocking difficulty curve it's actually an enjoyable little arcadey platformer in short bursts.



Kid Gloves' insane capacity for pain-inflicting punishment is so notorious that our baseball-capped, boxing-gloved hero is in fact still used today by the International Sado-masochism Society as their official mascot.

Nevertheless, KG didn't exactly set the *rest* of the world ablaze. Yet still, it spawned a sequel two years on from the original title. Don't let the minor matter of the protagonist appearing to be a totally divergent, hatless, gloveless character *Kid* you into thinking this began life as an independent game, its proposed publisher - Widnes-based Digital Magic - sank without a trace and Millennium swooped in to adopt 'Little Beau'. That's just crazy speculation.



Rather than tweak the main sprite to fit the brief, Millennium's marketing department explained away any confusion and inconsistencies in the manual...

"So Kid has hung up his gloves...

After his death-defying adventure, Kid finally made it home to safety, and put away his magic boxing gloves. Storing them in the dark recesses of his attic (along with his baseball cap), he vowed to forget the gloves and their supernatural properties.

But as time passes the magical power of the gloves engulfs Kid once again, and he embarks on a new and more extraordinary adventure, this time accompanied by his girlfriend Frida..."

Hang on a minute. You've gone to the trouble of writing yourself out of an embarrassing hole, and once you're free

and standing, you jump right back in again with both feet. Kid travels to surreal mystical realms whenever he puts on the boxing gloves, so how is it they've now enraptured him without actually being worn?

I'm doing it again aren't I? My therapist warned me about this...

"The magic worlds of the gloves are now ruled by Wievallard, an evil wizard hungry for power and pleasure. As soon as he spots Kid's girlfriend, a dastardly plan for kidnap forms in his mind, and she is whisked away by his overpowering sorcery, to be imprisoned in his mountain stronghold.

Now Kid is searching the mysterious magic worlds, hot on the trail of his beloved girlfriend and the wizard Wievallard. Your task is to help Kid in his undertaking - but beware of the evils that abound in this arcane world of magic and mystery!"



I AM IMPRISONED ON
THE CASTLE ISLAND.
PLEASE HURRY

So with a plot borrowed from a gazillion similar games and children's fairy-tales, it should come as no surprise to learn that the reason Kid Gloves 2 looks and plays like an 8-bit SEGA Master System game is that this was the aim from the outset. Coder Dave Semmens in an interview with Codetapper explains...

"I played Super Wonderland on the ST and really enjoyed it (I very rarely played games). I thought it would be great to write a game that followed the same structure so came up with the platformer."

Well, you've got to give him credit for fessing up to it. Some developers would claim "any similarity to real persons, living or dead, is purely coincidental".



In case parents were squeamish with regards to pixelated homicide, some reassurance is also built into the plot found in the manual.

"A vile spell has been cast over all of the creatures on the island within Wievallard, the evil wizard's domain. This forces them to defend the island to the death, but don't worry - by killing them you're setting them free to go and live in happiness and freedom, where evil wizards cannot reach them."

Phew! That's a relief. We're actually killing with kindness so it's not really *hostile* slaughter at all. I believe terrorist suicide bombers operate on the same principle. There's not much point bumping yourself off if there's no reward in the afterlife. I'm sure they know what they're doing. :|

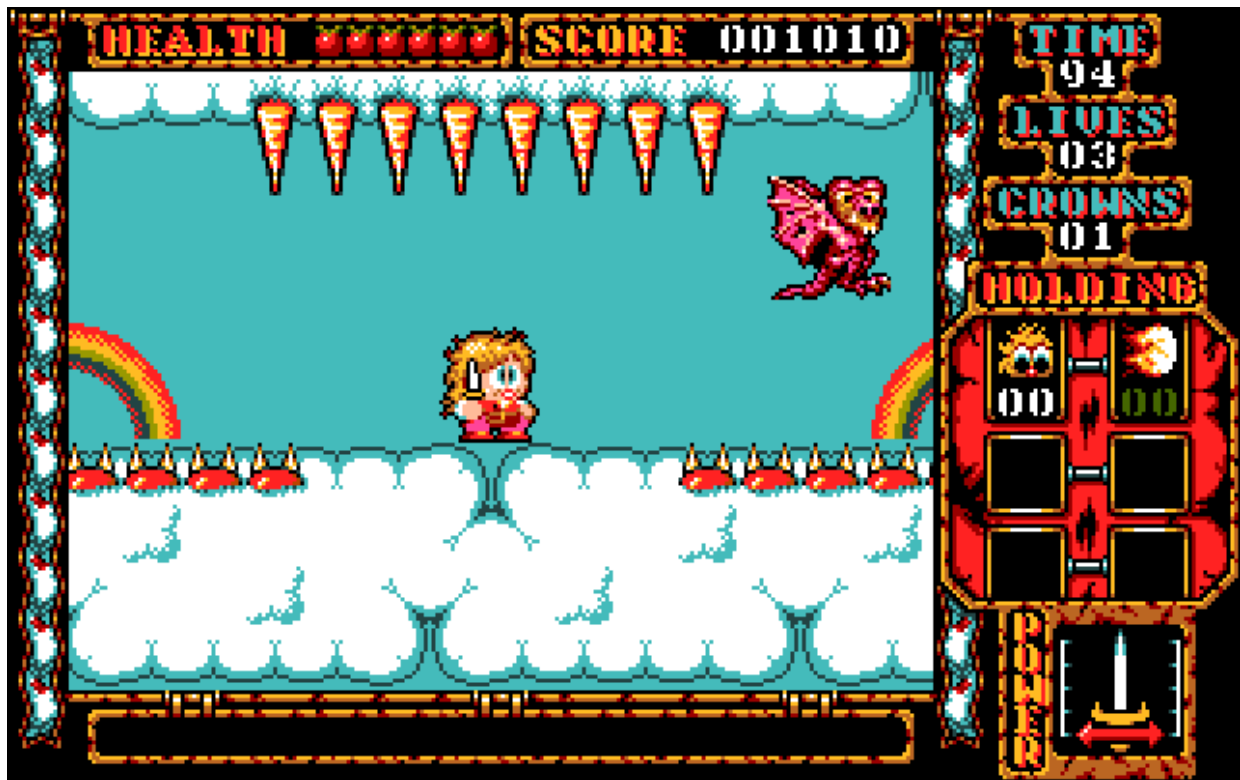
Cloning a single game Poundland style must have been considered a bit cliché so Funderboy is blended with Painbow Islands, Mega Only Child and New Zealand Fairyfail. Little Beau takes a sprinkling of highlights from each without doing justice to *any* of them.

...and the *real* reason for the name change? Jane Austen called to ask for her Beau back.

Levels - six of them - are split between distinctly themed islands, further broken down into four stages. Our goal on each is simply to find the key to the exit and split.

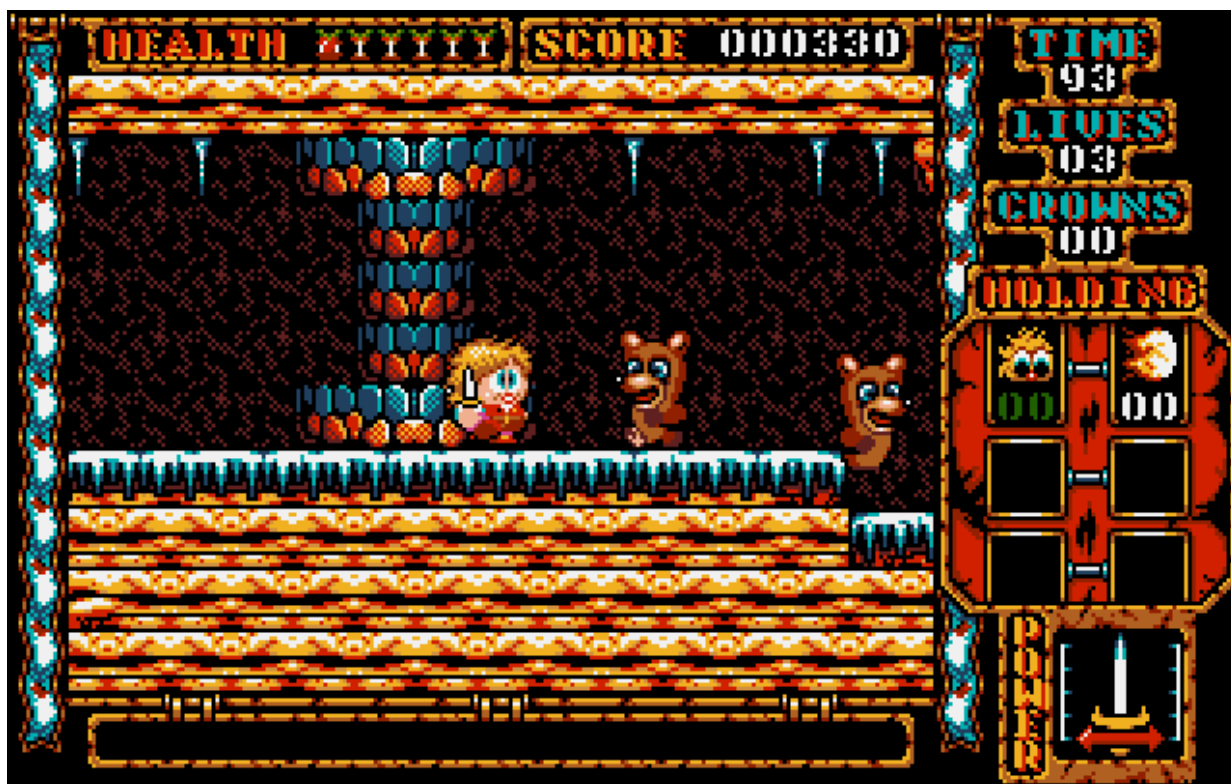


On Wind Island, you mooch about amongst clouds connected by ladders held in place with hovering balloons. Every so often we stumble across rainbows that look identical to those a certain Bub and Bob have been known to weaponise. Only these solely exist as background furniture in this case...



"I could deny, but I'll never realise, I've been chasing rainbows, all my life."

Alright, that's quite enough rainbow envy. Back in your shed now.



Could you knife double Boo-Boos in cold blood?

On the contrary, we begin our quest armed with a puny dagger barely longer than a chopstick, yet can soon upgrade to a longer range axe, Excalibur sword, fireballs or floor-bouncing 'nasty critters' in triplicate. Holding down fire builds their potency, releasing it... well, that's obvious, isn't it?

Not that you'll really experience the benefit when you come face to snout with the minimally animated dragon boss, for instance. His legs are completely stationary so movement - gliding along on his backside as if on a travelator - is entirely dependent on his half-hearted wing-flapping. It's a strange sight to behold.

That is until you bump into the zombie mummy in Egypt, and 'greater fanged yeti' in ice world. Little Beau's answer to the abominable snowman is described as "One of Wievallard's

first experiments in genetic engineering. Taking a hippopotamus and crossing it with a sabre-toothed polar bear he created this abomination to protect the northern area of his domain."

Personally I was thinking more along the lines of 'mouldy green troll in a parker' until I read the manual. Well, whatever, together they make everything else seem perfectly normal.

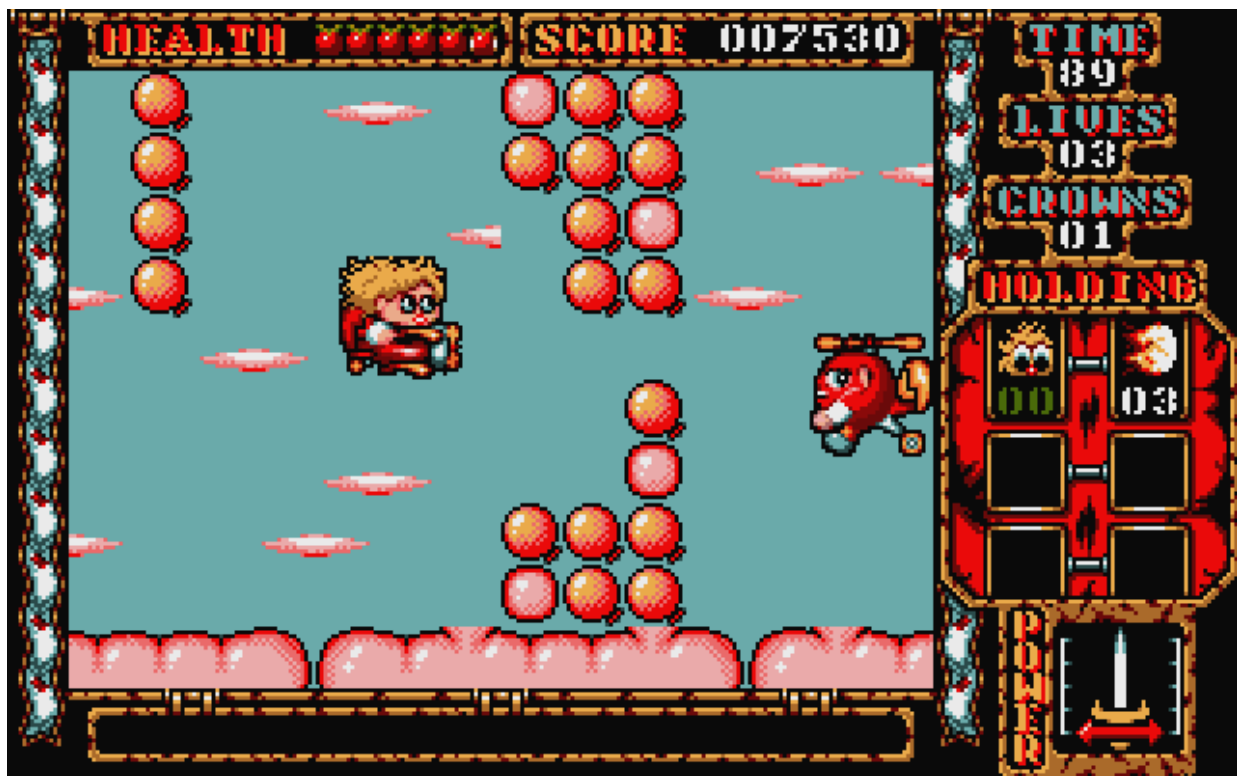


On vanquishing the bosses a pick 'n' mix selection of goodies are shaken loose for us to collect, much like in Super Wonderboy and Rainbow Islands. These can include power-ups, point-boosting gizmos, or tokens to be spent on attempts to win further enhancements via the one-armed bandit fruit machines littering the environment. If you're already familiar with the ones seen in Superfrog, released a year later you'll know what to expect.

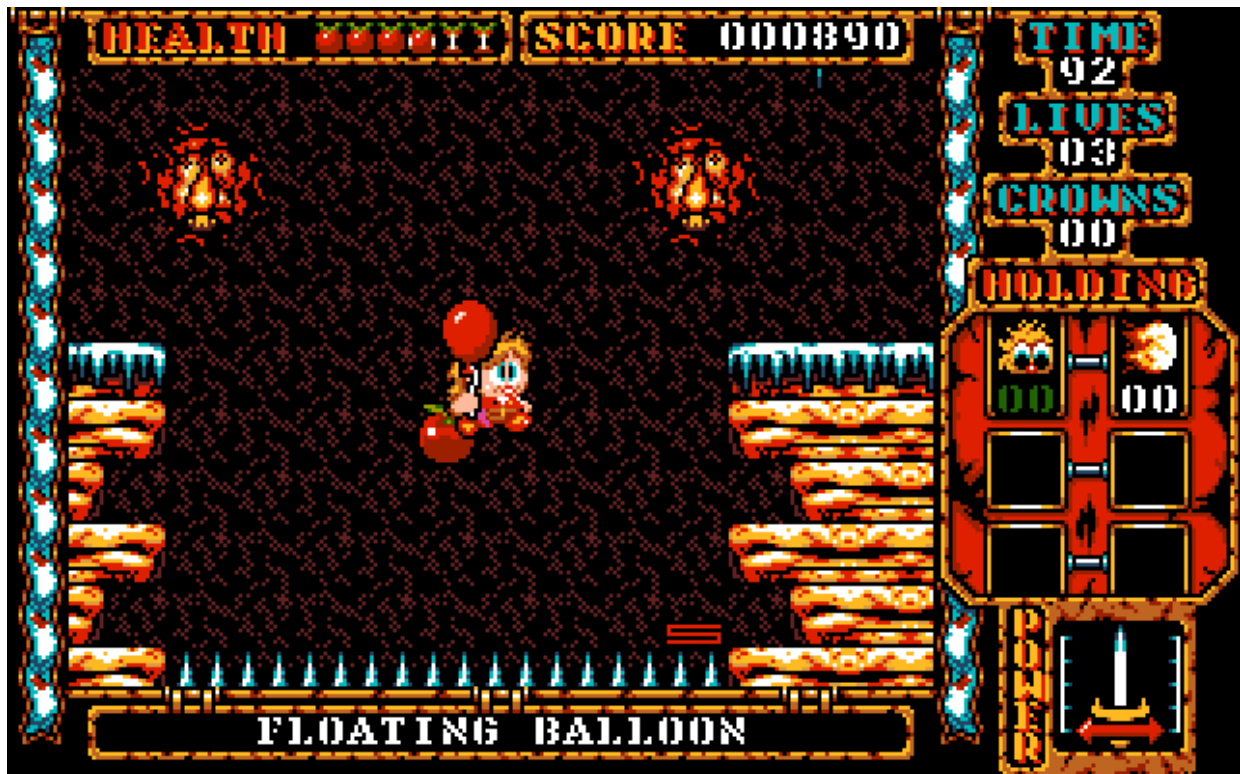


I knew there must be earlier examples of playable fruit machines cropping up in video games (that *aren't* gambling simulators, obviously), so put the question to the EAB community. Photon hit upon the oldest case suggesting Penguin Adventure (released for the MSX in 1986).

Other coin-op cabinets sweep you away into a biplane based shoot 'em up bonus stage for the price of a token. Here you weave between candyfloss-hued cloud intestines shooting comically ginormous bullets until you reach the end of level helicopter boss, presumably also inspired by Rainbow Islands.



On loan from New Zealand Story are helium balloons, allowing you to float over land-bound threats such as revolving spikey platforms. They're pure evil incarnate. I bet the dude who dreamt up the mythical iron maiden was responsible for these too. Neither are as painful as the juddery, clunky scrolling, however. There's really no excuse for that in such a low resource, basic platformer sporting such a hefty HUD, and no parallax scrolling.



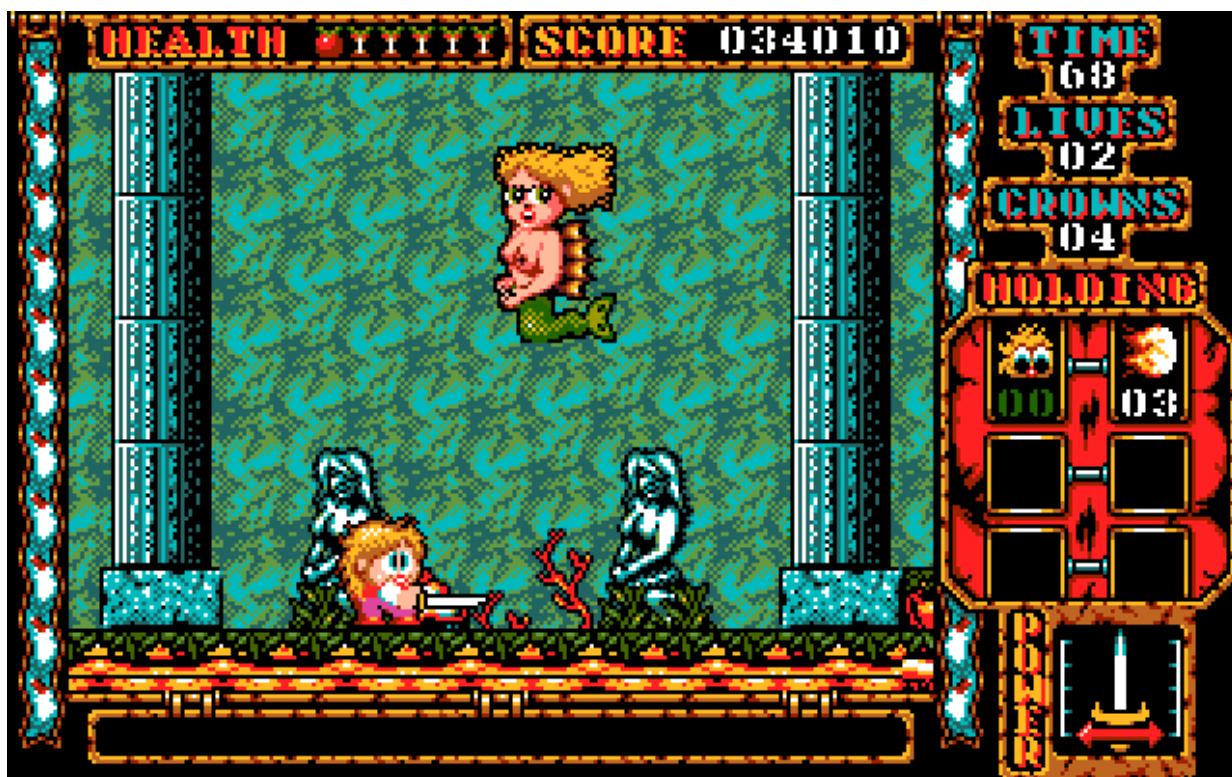
Tim Bartlett's music seems to have been composed in the spirit of 19th-century carnivals. There's not much of it, it's repetitive and reminds me of those mobile organs that play themselves once the gipsy who wheeled them to the funfair has wound them up.

Sound effects are a bit more lively and memorable, particularly the short samples of high-pitched (chipmunked) digitised speech. Oh yeah! Yippee! etc.

Reminiscent of Taito classic's primitive graphics Little Beau looks like a colourised Spectrum game. Doug Townsley's artwork would be passable on the Commodore 64, I suppose. On the Amiga in 1992 they're like a fish out of water. It's odd because Doug can do *much* better - he was the sole artist who worked on The Lion King, for instance. His joint contribution to The Incredible Crash Test Dummies too puts Little Beau in the shade. Maybe he was asked to keep it retro where that's concerned?

Hey, funny I should name-check the C64 in a completely natural, totally not forced way that's not at all just a segueway into mentioning that the C64 version is a Games That Weren't case, or that GTW64 have put together a super-thorough, really fascinating article on the subject.

C64 owners were treated to a rolling demo before the plug was pulled, while the Spectrum version previewed in Crash! (issue 91, August 1991) failed to escape the magazine's pages in digital form, in defiance of its highly evolved state.



An obligatory swimming segment is, of course, present and correct, which *should, in theory*, exacerbate the already frustrating inertia in effect. Except, counter-intuitively, being beneath the waves makes no real difference. You float, and walk around on the sea bed immersed in water exactly as you would on land, making you wonder what the point of the environmental diversification is.

Then 'out of the blue' (ho-ho) you encounter the pornographic mermaid bossette, Celia 'siren of the seas', featuring TOTALLY BARE NAKED EXPOSED BOOBIES!!!

A smidgen weird for a kid's game, no? ...and it's not even a *French* one. *That* would have explained *everything*.



No gimmick-nicking clone worth its salt would be complete without tacking on some Marioisms, so headbutty block-busting is a mainstay of obstacle-clearing and you'll need to tip-toe around Piranha Plants. You can also don a pair of 'big boots' that allow you to stomp beasts underfoot, as long as you're prepared to forego all other weapons while in effect.

Of course, the foremost inspiration is Wonderboy so that explains why stationary snakes - posing virtually no threat whatsoever - were considered a good idea, despite your natural instinct to question the logic behind them.



A helpful tip found in the manual states, "If the countdown reaches zero before you get to the exit your energy will be drained." Naturally a conspicuous replication of Monsterland's egg timer mechanic.

Buying useful items in shops isn't unique to Wonderboy, it likely dates back to text-based adventures (or interactive fiction if you prefer). Monsterland *does* however up the ante with its taverns where beer and cocktails can be purchased... from a rude crocodile who would benefit from some intensive customer service retraining.

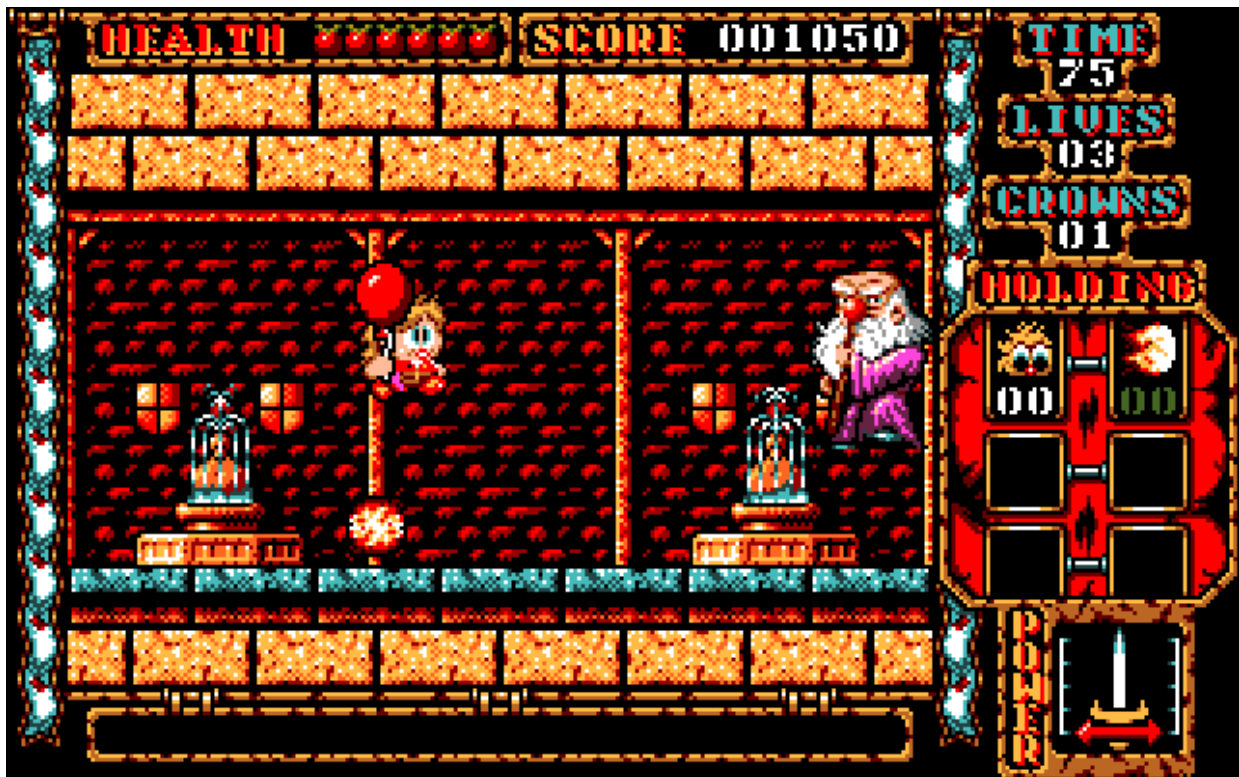
There's no direct corollary in Little Beau so this is completely and utterly irrelevant. I just thought it might be fun to bring that up anyway.

...What? Don't look at me in that tone of voice.

...

shrug

Remembering why we're here momentarily, the final boss we confront is the dastardly wizard who imprisoned our beloved... what's-her-name? We back him into a corner, he puts up zero defence and that's that. Mission accomplished.



*Caged kiwis? What a... like... totally random choice of pet.
Cerrrr-razy.*

Thingy rushes (in a non-animated sort of way) to our long-awaited reunion, congratulating her Beau with a probably-a-tad-too-lewd-for-a-kid's game...

"Hello there big boy! Is that a sword in your pocket or are you just pleased to see me?"

Ahem

I get the impression the developers assumed no-one would ever reach the end so any raised eyebrows from parents and PC nannies weren't of much concern.

Then again, considering the denouement of Monsterland (the Amiga and Atari ST versions anyway) it doesn't seem quite so disjointed and beyond the pale after all. A homage even?

"Congratulations! You have killed the great Dragonicus Fornicatus."

Pause for dramatic effect



So that's another random inspirational ingredient to chuck into the mixing bowl; Carry On films! ...or should that be Benny Hill?

In case I don't get round to turning this one into a video, here's how the story ends.

..."It's that little souvenir of a terrible year, Which makes me wonder why, and it's the memories of the shed that make me turn red, Surprise surprise surprise"...

Sorry, I got lost in the moment there.

Anyway.

Wonderboy dressed in a toga pokes his head up over a washing line pegged out with lingerie to check if the coast is clear.

It's *not*.

Tiki the kiwi spots him. Their eyes meet, pupils shrinking into a steely glare in perfect synchrony.

'Yakety Sax' abruptly kicks in, blaring out from a make-believe jukebox.

Wonderboy bolts as Tiki gives chase, flightless wings flapping furiously, squawking as if his stubby little tail's on fire.

Circling the trees, tents and Argos swing-ball set, the unlikely duo are joined by Mario, the Chiki Chiki Boys, and Bub and Bob, with Little Beau bringing up the rear.

Round and round they circuit the campsite (oh alright, it's now a *nudist* colony) as the film accelerates fourfold. Occasionally an instant freeze frame seizes focus as silence interjects. They all twist through 180 degrees to check if the mascot behind is still in pursuit, before resuming the bizarre conga line march to the accompaniment of Benny Hill's erratic theme tune.

En route Little Beau picks up a lemon, cherry, apple, diamond, emerald, ruby and ring as his score rockets through the roof. Blithely he munches through every last trinket and snack in his path... *including* a bottle of 'nasty poison'.

Little Beau clutches his throat, slumps to the ground thrashing uncontrollably, frothing at his lipsticked mouth.

Spirit evacuating his body through the nose and gaping mouth like a Watership Down bunny's silhouetted soul, his motionless eyes glaze over
starring at an empty high score table.

What the hell, why not slowly fade out to black with a bit of Art Garfunkel?

"Bright eyes, burning like fire, Bright eyes, how can you close and fail? How can the light that burned so brightly, Suddenly burn so pale? Bright eyes"